

# Game Prototype Loop

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## 1 Introduction

Initially the group focused on finding and working on loops inspired from other games, this was done mainly out of interest, but also because it could possibly help jump-start the creative processes. During further brainstorming a simple loop was found, for which to continue work on. The core loop was simple, and would revolve around the concept of exploration and problem handling. The loop would more or less function like this:

- Explore
- Encounter
- Resolve Encounter

At this point the loop didn't consist of much, but it allowed for further creative movement. The main idea was that the gameplay would function through a continuous exploration, and through decision-making. Here many ideas were based on other games, such as *Faster Than Light* (Subset Games 2012), *Heroes 3* (New World Computing 1999) and *Darkest Dungeon* (Red Hook Studios 2016).

## 2 Loop

As could be expected the main loop was not meant to sustain the full gameplay by itself. Here the idea would be to revolve a good portion of the gameplay around decision-making and meaningful choices. The idea was that through exploration the player would trigger new loops as events and would thus have to resolve them before moving back to the main loop again. Here several possibilities were discussed, most revolving around events such as those seen in *Faster Than Light* (see figure 1). In *Faster Than light* events are handled through player choices, often with choices that had specific requirements. The idea for the loop designed was very similar. Each event would have a subset of outcomes depending on the choices made, here each choice would also be affected by a set of modifiers, either negatively or positively affecting the outcome calculation. Then according to the outcome several results could happen. The player could

gain resources, or maybe be thrown into another loop, such as a battle loop. Though it was decided that the battle was of lesser importance and was thus handled by die rolls (which would be affected by the situation as well). This was meant primarily to be a placeholder, so as to shift the focus on developing the main loop as well as the games event handling.

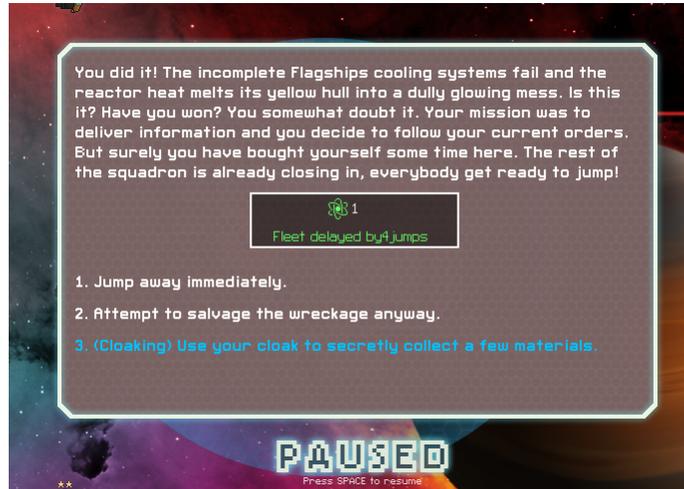


Figure 1: Example of an event from the game Faster Than Light (Subset Games 2012)

## 2.1 Game Direction

The direction the game was heading was heavily inspired by Rogue Like/lite games, and was also itself meant to move towards those genres. The main idea was to place the player in a situation where each choice could have a strong effect on the gameplay and the future success of the player. This was meant to place the player in a situation where each choice would be important, and ultimately place the player in a situation where a wrong move could be the slippery slope towards losing. The problem with a design like this was that it would require quite a bit of balancing to ultimately function. Next to the rogue like direction the group also wanted to focus on the exploration loop which was also meant to be the main loop of the game. The player would move through a system tiles, each representing a specific environment (such as, jungle, forest, plains etc.). Here events were meant to support the exploration through environment specific events as well as modifiers. This was meant to not only support player black boxing (a player with the right knowledge would know what environments would be best to avoid under different situations), but also to support the exploration of different environments. Next to this it was also planned that the environment generation would be supported by a system which would ensure that certain environments could only lead to specific other

environments. This kind of biome system was meant to result in a system where a knowledgeable player would be able to somewhat control which environments he would encounter, but this was also meant to create coherent environments.

### 3 Prototype

At some point it became apparent that the game had reached somewhat a higher level of complexity. This moved towards the decision of building the game in a computer format, as this would make it possible to make a good portion of the games rules invisible and computer handled. The thought was that, at this point, if the game was to be build as a board game, the amount of rules, and situation specific conditions, would make the game difficult to handle. Though despite the choice for a computer based format. It was still decided that a paper prototype would prove beneficial. This choice was made due to several thoughts. The first being that the game would take to long to reach a point where it would be test worthy, and at this point it would be "too time expensive" to start over. Here a paper prototype would have the advantage of opening up for the possibility of early testing of the game loop, and actually trying out how the game would work. This would also make the decision of whether this was a good direction to move in, easier. The second thought was that a paper prototype would ease up the design process, as different designs could be tried out. Of course the downside would be that it would be necessary to spend time building the paper prototype, which (if the design direction where to be held) would essentially not be of any future use after an early computer version would be built.

### 4 Reflection

Upon reflection the loop could easily have benefited from a few more layers. As it stood the loop main loop consisted mainly of three entities. The idea at the time was that a simple loop would be easier to handle, but would also allow for easier additions later on. But adding one or two more points in the loop could have helped bringing more incentive for the player to explore and think of his choices. Say for example an addition of resource spending and gathering were added to the game. Resources could have been a possible reward for successive event handling, and would in turn also have allowed for the player to take further risks, which may have benefited the notion of exploration. This would also have set the game in a direction where the design would have been focused on the handling of resources, and the overall goal for resource handling. An example of such a design could be seen from *Faster Than Light* (Subset Games 2012), where the player is encouraged to explore and develop more encounters, so as to prepare for the final showdown which is the main goal of the game. This would also have allowed for strategic event avoidance as well as seeking. Coupling this with the plans for tile specific events, could also have encouraged the player to

seek out specific tile types so as to increase the odds for finding specific events (and thus gathering specific resources).

## 5 Conclusion

Throughout this process a main loop was developed. This loop was found to be fairly simple, which on one hand made the design process simpler, but also constrained the outset of the development of the game. It was quickly found that the game would require a layer of complexity which would be better fitting for a pc game format, than for a board game format.

The direction of the game was found through primarily inspiration from other games, which also helped easing the process. At this point it was decided upon to create a paper prototype for early testing, but also to support early design work. In the end the loop proved to possibly be too simple, and which may have hurt the overall design of the game, and may explain player incentive for exploration.